

## **Transitioning from Foster Care to Shared Lives – a guide for Carers.**

It may be best for a young person with additional needs who is already living with a foster carer to remain living in that household once they turn 18. This requires foster carers to become Shared Lives providers.

There are real benefits for young people who are in a foster care arrangement to remain there post 18. Transition into adulthood is an anxious and confusing time for all young people, but especially for those who have additional needs and are not living within their birth family. Foster carers that convert to Shared Lives providers can provide the young person with consistency within that nurturing care arrangement, this maintains the attachments that the young person will have built with those carers and their wider family and friends. It means that the young person does not have to move house, and they continue within the home that they are already familiar with. It also means that they can remain in the community where they have spent some of their childhood, which is important for maintaining wider friendships and routines. It can also provide a place to continue to develop Preparing for Adulthood outcomes that would have started within the fostering arrangement, with the consistency of their trusted carers.

### **Next Steps:**

- The young person needs to be assessed by a social worker/social care worker as having eligible care and support needs to be funded as an adult. The young person will be consulted about their wishes, or if deemed necessary through a mental capacity assessment, a decision will be made as to whether it is in their best interest to remain living with the foster carers.
- If the young person does not meet the eligibility criteria for adult social care, then a Staying Put arrangement may be offered.
- Foster Carers need to apply to be assessed and approved at panel as Shared Lives Providers. This will take 3 to 4 months to complete.

### **Assessment**

Foster carers interested in becoming Shared Lives Providers undergo a comprehensive application process, which assesses their home environment and suitability for providing adult care resulting in a portfolio which is then presented at panel for consideration. All applicants must be present at panel. Training is included in this process. With the Foster Carers consent, their fostering agency is approached so that their fostering experience can be taken into account. For example, Annual Review documentation, and training records may be shared. They are allocated a Shared Lives worker to support them through this process.

### **The Portfolio consists of:**

- Application form
- Day in the life, personal profile, and community network map
- Personal and professional references
- DBS check
- Occupational Health Check
- Permission from a mortgage lender or landlord
- Completion of home risk assessments
- WCC Care Certificate training or equivalent
- Completion of the Shared Lives Scheme induction
- Shared Lives Providers will be required to obtain public liability insurance upon approval via membership of Shared Lives Plus, a national organisation - [Home - Shared Lives Plus](#)

### **Role of the Shared Lives scheme**

- The Shared Lives scheme will support foster carers to transition to Shared Lives by assessing their capability and skills to support the young person to have a life outside of the family home, connect the young person with their community and develop and grow as a young adult.
- Training will need to take place both pre-assessment and post assessment. This is facilitated by the Shared Lives scheme.
- Once approved, the Shared Lives scheme will visit the placement a minimum of 4 times a year to monitor and assess compliance.
- All Shared Lives Providers have an allocated Shared Lives worker who is available to offer support and guidance during the application process and post approval.

### **Training Requirements**

When supporting a transition into adult services, it is important to recognise that once a person turns 18, legislation changes and the way they receive services and are assessed for services will be different. Therefore, when a foster carer transitions into adult services there will also be differences within their role and how they support an individual. This section will explore the training required when transitioning and the change in terminology you will come across when undertaking training.

The Care Act 2014 underpins how an adult with care and support needs should be supported.

As part of the transition into Shared Lives, you will be required to undertake:

- Fast Track induction training – one day face to face course

- Care Certificate training – 4 ½ day course consisting of online training via Microsoft Teams, sways (information booklets and knowledge assessments) and a face-to-face session to complete the First Aid aspect of the training.
- An observation booklet and a professional discussion (Supported by your Shared Lives worker).

The above is one off training and carried out over a period of 12 weeks. Ongoing training commitments once approved:

- Prevent- one off training.
- Oliver McGowan mandatory training – one off training
- Training specific to person supported in placement, for example epilepsy.
- Shared Lives training refreshed 3 yearly:
  - Safeguarding Adults and MCA
  - First Aid (1 day course, face to face)
  - Medication
  - Fire Awareness
  - Diligent/manual handling – annual competences
  - Infection Control

Training will focus on support being person centred, therefore encouraging independence and choice and control, whilst also maintaining professional boundaries. You will notice the change in terminology, often a young person/LAC may be referred to as an adult, individual or person with care and support needs.

## **Record Keeping in Shared Lives**

CHARMS is supplied to Worcestershire Shared Lives by Social Care Network Solutions Ltd (SCN).

SCN is a social enterprise, it provides an online, secure system that supports care providers to keep their records safe.

Shared Lives providers log on to CHARMS, using a twostep verification, to access the records of those they support and their own Shared Lives record. Records include the individual plan, risk assessments, placement, and license agreements. Shared Lives providers can also access their training records, policies, the Shared Lives handbook and provider meeting minutes.

CHARMS is used to keep the scheme up to date on placements for example health and wellbeing including medical appointments and other significant events. It also can be used to complete recording such as household and rent contributions, statement of income, medication received and returned to the pharmacy.

You will be fully supported by the Shared Lives team to use CHARMS confidently.

## **Regulation**

- Shared Lives schemes are subject to different regulations to foster care. They also have separate Regulators. Shared Lives is regulated in England by the Care Quality Commission.
- New DBS checks for all adults involved in the care of a young person will need to be carried out.

## **Funding**

- Adult Services operate a different funding system to Childrens' Services. As such, your fee payment date may not be for some weeks after your last payment as foster carers. Payments are made every 4 weeks.
- Payments will be backdated; however, it is important to be mindful that there may be a gap during the changeover between children and adults' services, and to be prepared for this.
- Payment dates can be found at [Provider portal and payments](#)  
[| Worcestershire County Council](#)
- Level of respite support for Shared Lives carers and foster carers may differ.

## **Benefits**

- The young person's Universal Credit and any other benefits they claim will be used to make a payment to you for rent and a contribution to household expenses. Rent is set in line with the Local Housing Allowance 1 bedroom rate. You will be informed of these figures as soon as possible during the application process.
- An application for Universal Credit will need to be made by either the existing appointee or with the assistance of the young person's PA.
- In advance of the young person turning 18, you will need to obtain take proof of their attendance at school or college.
- Attendance at a local job centre will be required with you and the young person to start the claim, even if the initial application is done online.
- You will need to take with you proof of their attendance at school or college and the Shared Lives License Agreement which will show the rent being charged to the young person.
- It may also be necessary to obtain a fit note from the young

person's GP to confirm that they are not available for work. The Job Centre will confirm when they no longer require these.

- If the young person is not able to work in the longer term, then an additional Universal Credit payment may be available - [Health](#)

[conditions, disability and Universal Credit: If you have a Work](#)

[Capability Assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- The young person will need to operate their Universal Credit claim online using the Journal system and may need support with this. You can ask the Job Centre to provide help using this system.

### **Rent and Household Contribution**

- The young person will be required to make payments from their bank account to you every 4 weeks for rent and household

contribution (from their Universal Credit payment), so it is important that whoever will take charge of the young person's finances (if not the young person themselves) once they reach 18 is aware of this so that arrangements can be made for payments to be provided to you. These sums are fixed by Shared Lives

### **Finances**

Prior to transitioning into Shared Lives, the financial support the young person requires is assessed by their social worker. This identifies if the young person needs support with finances and who will support them. There are costs to the young person when they move into shared lives, the rent and household contribution, therefore it is important that the young person has claimed the benefits to which they are entitled.

The abilities, support required and how this is achieved is clearly recorded in the young person's Shared Lives care plan, which is called an Individual Plan. The Individual Plan is reviewed at least annually or sooner if there is a change. This involves the individual and the Shared lives provider.

The Shared Lives Provider works in accordance with the aims and objectives of Individual Plan and paperwork is expected from the provider to evidence this.

People living in Shared Lives have varying levels of ability to manage their own money, which is usually split into two distinct areas:

- People who use Shared Lives who can manage their own finances (individually or with some support).
- People who use Shared Lives who are unable to manage their own finances.

Depending on how much support the provider gives the young person or

if there is a financial appointee or Deputy, the recording will vary.

If the Provider holds any finances or valuable items these are recorded on-

- Petty cash form [Cash in and out recorded, receipts to be held]
- Bank statements and evidence of expenditure.
- Document and valuable held form.

There are payments the providers receive from the individual, each of these payments need to be recorded by the provider-

- Rent received form.
- Household contribution form.
- Mileage

As a provider you may be involved budget management, which could consist of advice and guidance but also reporting concerns and seeking support when necessary. A form to support this is the-

- Statement of income [Incomings and outgoings, remaining disposable income].

The finances may be managed by a third party, in the role as DWP Appointee or Deputy, which could be a corporate appointee, family member/friend of the young person or solicitor. The provider would be expected to support them to carry out their duties and maintain a professional relationship.

Your Shared Lives Worker, during all the four support and monitoring visits throughout the year, will check how finances are being managed including checking the correct forms are being used and completed. These processes protect the young person from financial abuse or the mishandling of their money and protect Shared Lives Providers from allegations of misconduct, it is important that appropriate procedures are followed, and records are kept. Shared Lives Providers who manage the financial affairs of Individuals must seek permission from the Shared Lives Scheme for any purchase of an item costing more than £500 to ensure their protection and to reduce the likelihood of any allegation regarding their financial dealings for Individuals.

- Despite any arrangements you might have had whilst you were a foster carer, your Shared Lives worker will require information about the young person's finances on a regular basis.

- Depending on your level of involvement, it may be necessary to provide bank statements and all receipts showing any monies the

young person has spent.

- Shared Lives will provide guidance as to what the young person is expected to pay for and what you are expected to fund.

### **Decision making and Mental Capacity**

The biggest shift for foster carers that are converting to Shared Lives providers to continue to accommodate and support their young person is the change from being the decision maker for that young person, to them having the right to make their own decisions as any other young adult would.

This can feel tricky for foster carers as up until 18 there is an emphasis on the protection of the young person and as an adult there should be an acceptance that they have the right to make unwise decisions and to take risks. However young people who have additional needs or disabilities may need additional support to do this. The Mental Capacity Act provides a framework for decision making for adults from 16+ who have a disability.

Essentially all decision making should be undertaken by the young person, those that are supporting them should encourage this and provide them with the information and support do so as far as they are able.

Within a Shared Lives setting this may be as straight forward as the provision of choices, for example would you like toast or cereal for breakfast? But for bigger decisions such as who will support them to manage their money, or if they need to sign a license agreement, if there is any doubt about their capacity to do this, then a mental capacity assessment would be required.

These are usually completed by a social worker, and if they lack capacity then a Best Interest Decision would be required which would involve the important people in that young person's life. An advocate may also be required to support with this. You can read more about the Mental Capacity Act and find additional resources here [mental capacity act resource pack 1.pdf \(mencap.org.uk\)](#)

## **Positive risk taking**

- Risk is the probability that an event will occur with beneficial or harmful outcomes for a particular person or others who they encounter.
  - Positive risk-taking starts with identifying the potential benefit or harm. The desired outcome is to encourage and support people in positive risk-taking to achieve personal change or growth.
  - Positive risk-taking encourages the management of risks to maximise people's choice and control over their lives.
  - Positive risk-taking encourages a strengths-based approach, shifting focus from what an individual cannot do to what they can achieve.
  - Positive risk-taking is aimed at empowering people to have opportunities that will benefit them, build their confidence, and live more independently.
  - Risks should be considered and assessed before it occurs, including the probability of the risk occurring and the potential impact if it does. Not all impacts of risk negative, they can be positive.
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- Going to a coffee shop, cinema, or supermarket without support
  - Going for a walk around the park alone
  - Going on a bus for a short journey

- Joining a club

#### o **Benefits of positive risk taking**

- Empowering people to pursue ambitions and goals
- Enabling decision making
- Recognising and supporting people's autonomy
- Promoting people's rights in taking risks and making mistakes
- Encouraging self-esteem, self-management, and independence

#### • **How does shared lives support positive risk taking?**

• The Shared Lives scheme supports adults who have additional support needs and aims to build on life skills for more independent living. Shared lives provide the opportunity for adults to take risks, while being supported to recognise the benefits and potential harm to risk-taking. The scheme aims to achieve this through their essential outcomes for adults. These are;

- Being part of and involved in the community.
- Having the opportunity to develop new skills.
- The opportunity to be as independent as possible.
- Having privacy at home and in their wider life.
- Being treated with dignity, consideration, and respect.
- Support and encouragement to make decisions.

#### **Further information can be found below:**

<https://catalystgrp.co.uk/blog/positive-risk-taking-in-health-and-social-care/#examples-of-positive-risk-taking-approach>

#### **How is Shared Lives different to foster care?**

Foster carers have delegated authority meaning they are being able to make day to day decisions in conjunction with the local authority who are corporate parents and have parental responsibility. A foster carers role has a focus on protection, including managing risks for young people, based on what is safe and appropriate. This includes decisions around social media usage, visiting friends' houses, school trips, sports, or clubs etc.

Shared Lives carers do not have delegated authority and therefore cannot make decisions for the young person. The Mental Capacity route needs to be followed if the young person is not able to make a particular decision, and a best interests decision taken as prescribed by law.



Shared Lives carers can support the young person to make decisions, but as the young person is above eighteen years of age, independence and risk taking is encouraged and cannot be prohibited by a Shared Lives carer. Risks that a young person may take following their eighteenth birthday include drinking alcohol, staying out late, and having a relationship. These decisions can be made by the young person. Shared Lives carers can discuss house rules with the young person and discuss alcohol usage, curfews, and partners staying over, however these risks cannot be prohibited.

Becoming a Shared Lives Provider offers Foster Carers a rewarding opportunity to continue supporting a young person's journey into adulthood. By understanding the comprehensive process, from assessment and training to financial planning and regulatory compliance, carers can ensure a smooth and beneficial transition for both themselves, and the young person in their care.